



**The Phoenix Family Readiness Group Newsletter**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Special Troops Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (M)**  
**Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07**



**Issue 12 ~ 16-30 March 2006**



**Above: PFC Steven Blakley being awarded an Army Achievement Medal for his hard work in Bravo Company.**

Wow, have things changed in the past two weeks. In a very short time, we've transitioned from patrolling and covering battle space, to overseeing all the construction, electrical and water projects in the brigade area. We have changed our focus to help the flow, functionality and completion of more than 70 civil military projects throughout the Brigade area. In addition to taking on the new projects, we've added two additions to our Phoenix Team – two Iraqi-born, American citizen engineers. They're a great team, and we're proud to have them working with us. They bring knowledge, experience, and calm demeanors – not to mention a little humor here and there.

All of this change marks a great point in our deployment, because we've given a portion of our battle space to the Iraqi Army. Every inch of land that they pick up means less for us to cover and another step closer to establishing a stable Iraqi Army. It is refreshing to change our focus and for some of us get new jobs.

We're continuing to award Soldiers for great work. They represent the battalion well and always make us proud. So far, 98 Soldiers have taken leave, over 18% of the battalion. Until we make it home ourselves, we sincerely appreciate the support and encouragement you all continue to provide with letters, emails and packages.

### **SERGEANT MAJOR SEAMAN**

It's springtime in Iraq and April is fast approaching. I am unsure of what type of spring you're having in Texas. I would describe the spring in Iraq as pleasant. The mornings are cool and dry; it warms up in the afternoon, and the evenings are cool with great sunsets. Most times a breeze is blowing and some days its just plain windy. We have had a couple of dust storms as well.



**Above: CSM Seaman and PFC Moschos talking to Brigadier General Halverson.**

With the change in the season the Phoenix Battalion is also getting a change of mission. By the end of March, we will

have transitioned all our battle space to other units and are now concentrating our main effort on Civil Military Operations. Basically we are in the project business. This is good news and very interesting work. We are the unit that makes the Iraqi people happy. Projects have a wide range of definition, everything from installing a pump to irrigating fields, to school repair,



Above: Some of our Military Police Soldiers who recently received their Combat Action Badges.

restoring electricity, new sewer lines – it can be anything. These projects range from city to town to rural and they are located all over the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Area. Some of the Iraqi towns and city names are (and I hope you have fun trying to pronouncing them): Mushada, Tarimiyah, Saba al Bohr, Muzerfa, Jorf al Mieb, Hanoon Villiage, Sheik Hamid Villiage and Hussaniyah. These are just a few and can be found on any map of Iraq. Back to the project business: just so you know, on these projects, our Soldiers are not the ones laboring; we are managing, checking and tracking them.

Our Soldiers of all ranks are performing their duties superbly. I recently completed a walk thru of all the company areas and everywhere else we have soldiers working. My observation or realization was that the Phoenix Soldiers are all over the place, involved in every

aspect of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade operation. From top to bottom, just about everywhere you go you will find a Phoenix battalion Soldier...usually they are dirty or tired, but they are in uniform and smiling. They are great Americans, our sons and daughters, loved ones; they have desires, dreams, goals and ambitions. They are brave, grouchy, honorable, hard-working, impatient, and very intelligent. I am very proud of every one of them.

P.S. In case you are wondering, the full IBAS (protective vest we wear outside the wire) without water and ammunition now weights 31lbs. We've added a couple new pieces to the arms and sides which made it heavier – and *a whole lot more fun* to wear.

## PHOENIX SPOTLIGHT

### “THE WITCHDOCTORS”



Above: CPT Powell visiting with the locals on a patrol.

This is Witchdoctor 7 [Medic Platoon Sergeant, Sergeant First Class Antwone Jones] reporting to you from Camp Taji, Iraq. The Witchdoctor element has been busy supporting your soldiers in a wide variety of missions. We have soldiers that rotate to perform duties with each of the elements; Outlaw [MPs], Outkast [Security], Bandit [EOD], Thunderbird [Motorpool/Quick Reaction Force], Hustler, and PSDs [Brigade and

Battalion Commander's Security]. This has exposed the witchdoctors to a variety of new experiences as each element has its own mission and conducts their business in a variety of ways. Luckily, we can honestly say besides the hours spent with the soldiers we haven't been busy at all. Which is a good thing because that means no one is getting hurt. The Witchdoctors want to be the least used asset over here, and I can assure you that everyone in the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Troops Battalion agrees with us. Two of the Witchdoctors (WD) have earned their Combat Medical Badge including PFC Genet and CPL Blohm. Others have been submitted and will likely be approved soon. WD-1 will win the Soldier of the month board in April. I am confident in that. I have a side bet with Outlaw 7 (SFC Quinn) & Outlaw 2 (SSG Rodriguez) (I didn't tell them I already paid the First Sergeant)! We also have two soldiers getting promoted to the rank of Specialist in March; they are WD-3 SPC Scott and WD-4 SPC Lundberg. Congrats to them for a promotion well deserved. WD-4 will have a birthday on 31 Mar so congrats to her. We miss all of you and will see you in a short time from now.

-- Witchdoctor 7 - SFC Jones

## BATTALION TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER

The tactical operation center (TOC) is the center place in the battalion through which, all information flows. In essence it is the heart of the unit, where all data is collected and pushed out to the parts that need it, from brigade to squad level. Very similar to how the heart pumps fresh blood to the parts of the body that need it, the TOC's function is just that vital when it comes to understanding and coordinating efforts on the battle field.

Our TOC operates in two shifts, day/night maintaining 24 hour operations. The day shift and night shift maintain

seamless operations and effective handoffs of all knowledge allowing for outstanding command and control. The TOC is comprised of an operation officer ("The 3"), two assistant operation officers (day/night "Battle CPTs"), and several non-commissioned officers ("Battle NCOs"), and enlisted soldiers. The sergeants are the team members that ensure that everybody stays focused and enforces the standards of professionalism, and proficiency that are essential to success of the mission.



**Above: A key leader in the TOC, MSG Pacheco outside the wire.**

The tempo of a typical day in the TOC is similar to a roller coaster with events happening simultaneously or in rapid succession, and times when very few things happen. This tempo can consist within a day, or can happen over several days. There is no fixed rate in a counter insurgency war. Like a fire department there are times when we are called into immediate action for days on end, and other when we are just waiting and fighting our greatest enemy, complacency. As a unit we must always stay vigilant and alert to ensure our mission is accomplished and that our troops are as safe/and as prepared as possible.

Recently the Phoenix TOC was tasked with an additional mission. Because of the depth of character and vast abilities of our unit, Phoenix has



been tasked with managing and tracking all civil projects in the Brigade area of operations. This is a significant mission and vital to winning the support of the local populace. Win the heart of the people and you win the war. If there are few who like the insurgents, then their ability to hide and conduct attacks is dramatically reduced. From elementary schools to women's centers, these projects provide Iraqis with support services and resources never experienced before. They therefore represent the greatest threat to the insurgent and thus, only a unit like Phoenix can handle this sophisticated, vital, and humanitarian task.

-- SPC Stephen Deveney and CPT Thao Reed

### NEW ADDITIONS



Above: Bill (left) and Hanz (right) at their work station in the TOC.

As mentioned in the opening paragraph, our new mission of projects has brought some new additions to our battalion. They are contracted engineers "Bill" and "Hanz". For their safety, we cannot publish their real names in this letter, but we'll call them by their nicknames instead.

They are both Iraqi born men, who in the past fifteen years moved to the United States. They reside in San Diego, California with their families, but were recruited for their expert skills to come to Iraq and help with some engineering projects.

Bill moved to San Diego in 1998 with his wife and family. He has a master's degree in irrigation and speaks several languages, to include old Aramaic, Arabic and English. He has two sons and one daughter, all in their twenties.

Hanz has lived in San Diego for fifteen years with his wife and four children. He has two girls in their thirties and two boys in their late twenties. He is a historian and a writer who also has a degree in civil engineering. He is known to be the authority on Christian history in Iraq and also speaks Aramaic, Arabic and English.

Bill and Hanz are both very nice men who are supplementing our operations with their knowledge of engineering and also their Arabic! We're glad to have them here and we know that if we listen enough, we can learn a lot, not only about engineering, but about life as well.

### A WORD FROM OUR CHAPLAIN CPT DAVID FELL

Our busy lives are filled with worries of all kinds. Sometimes these worries become overwhelming. There are many ways to deal with our anxieties. Some ways are more helpful and healthy than others. A couple of the not so helpful ways of dealing with anxiety or stress may be the excessive use of alcohol, spending/shopping sprees and comfort foods. These things when taken to excess only cause new problems. Some productive ways of dealing with the challenges of life could be exercise, proper diet, a rests plan, etc. God also provides us with another tool that can help us deal with the worries and anxieties of life—prayer and thanksgiving. The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4: 6, 7 "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with



Above: Chaplain Fell just before gearing up for a mission with EOD.

thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

As we grow and learn to deal with our anxiety let us always remember that we can turn to God in prayer and let us remember to give thanks to Him for all the blessing we enjoy. God's peace be with you all.

-- Chaplain Fell

## PHOENIX 6

*Shaku Maku* (Arabic "What is happening?"). Well actually a lot is happening here in Iraqi as you can tell from all of the great articles in this edition of the Phoenix newsletter. Your Soldiers are doing great as we continue to grow and change. Our new EOD company from Fort Leonard Wood "Blaster" is firmly on the ground now and executing missions. We are integrating all of the Brigade's Civil Affairs teams into our project operations; we have added several civilian engineers and we will soon add a couple more intelligence teams to Alpha Company. The battalion is truly accomplishing what the Army designed it for - be the integrator of specialty units and teams into the Brigade. We have done this well so far and I am very proud of our efforts, not to mention our

huge success at mission accomplishment. Until next time *Mushi* (Arabic "Business as usual").

-- LTC John W. Cross



Above: Iraqi Kids at one of our many project sites



## To Dare Is To Do

Larry A. Seaman  
Command Sergeant Major  
U.S. Army

John W. Cross  
LTC, EN  
Commanding